

# The Bulletin

Forestry & Agriculture Edition - VOLUME 1 - 2025



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### Cover

LFC Milling, a major maize operation in the Wesselsbron area, has started replacing their trusted fleet of Bell Haulage Tractors with the newer Bell 1736AF Haulage Tractors and are impressed with the benefits the six-cylinder engine delivers. Read the full story on page 6.

### Published by

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Bell156

## insight



pre-production units in 2025. The market launch is expected in 2026, initially in South Africa, before being rolled out globally. This product will join our existing range of attachments for forestry applications, which includes felling heads and grapples, among others.

In addition to increasing our product offering, our forestry and agriculture business continues to gain momentum through our expanding independent dealer network in South Africa. The latest few appointments are featured in the magazine, and we welcome them to the Bell family. This network complements those BESSA dealers who are more focused on the agriculture industry by allowing us to reach farming communities in regions where we were previously not represented.

In March, we hosted our second dealer conference, and I would like to thank our dealer network for making the trek to Richards Bay to support the event. While it's always special to show people the Bell factory for the first time, the conference importantly gave our dealers a better understanding of the Bell - JCB partnership, product range, and culture.

I am passionate about superior customer service, and this network shares this commitment wholeheartedly. In the agricultural sector, where reliability and support are critical, you can rely on our dealer network to ensure that you get the most from your Bell and JCB agricultural machines. More than business partners, our dealers are entrenched in their communities, offering expert advice, responsive service, and genuine care for their customers. Their dedication strengthens the Bell brand and fosters lasting relationships built on trust and support. We value their passion and the essential role they play in keeping your agricultural operations running smoothly.

Ashley Bell  
Group Chief Executive Officer

NAMPO is undoubtedly one of the highlights on our South African calendar and this year is no exception as we showcase three new products – our much-anticipated Bell Motor Grader, a higher-powered Series V Haulage Tractor, and the top-of-the-range JCB 3CX Pro.

Following the dry conditions experienced in 2024, economists are reporting that our local agricultural sector is in positive territory, which is good news for us all. Livestock and dairy are likely to benefit from an improved consumer environment, soybean production is set to rebound on increased yields, maize is looking strong on the back of February rains, and the macadamia industry is showing pleasing resilience and price recovery.

We're excited about the forestry and agriculture sectors and are constantly looking at growing our participation. We are making strides with other new product developments to increase our OEM offering. Testing of our timber processing head continues, and we will be building

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# Major maize operation chooses Bell Tractors

*In layman's terms, two additional cylinders added to a four-cylinder diesel engine should provide more horsepower, but would you believe that those same two additional cylinders can also reduce fuel consumption?*



This is the unlikely-sounding experience that a hugely successful family-run farming business in the Free State is enjoying after cutting their teeth on specialised haulage machines provided by Bell Equipment.

LFC Milling, located in Wesselsbron in the heart of the Free State maize growing area, was established by Lourens van der Linde (Snr). By 1993, he was a successful maize farmer in his own right but wanted to create a legacy for his three sons who were growing up.

The three Van der Linde sons, Lourens Jnr, Francois, and Cobus, from whose initials the company derives its name, make up the fifth generation of the family whose forebears first farmed the land called Klein Constantia, in 1888. The farm lies to the northwest of Wesselsbron with the youngest brother, Lourens Jnr, overseeing maize cultivation. The farm sells its

products to the South African Futures Exchange (SAFEX) at the best possible prices.

"Our dad, Lourens Snr was keen to own more of the maize value-chain, hence seeing the need for a maize mill that has now grown exponentially through several phases. We're proud to say that our maize products are distributed right across South Africa," says Cobus van der Linde, the Operations Manager at the mill. His brother, Francois, manages the financial side of the business, and all three brothers have tertiary qualifications in finance and agriculture respectively.

LFC Milling made the agricultural headlines in 2023 when the company unveiled the largest single maize silo in the world, a colossal concrete and steel structure that can contain almost 100 000 tons of maize feedstock for the mill.

However, no mill can operate without harvested maize being delivered to it and, to this end, in late 2017, LFC Milling started exploring the possibility of creating a dedicated logistics arm to supply the mill with its raw product and have a wider use to add further value that would justify the capital expenditure needed.

"After extensive research into the wider tractor market, we came across a solution that Bell Equipment, through its knowledgeable sales representative in our area, Rickus Erasmus, could offer us," says Cobus. "While we have a substantial fleet of agricultural tractors, we prefer dedicating them to land preparation and other purely agricultural tasks, and we discovered that Bell Equipment could provide us with the solution in a haulage tractor."



**(From left): Francois, Cobus, Lourens Snr, and Lourens Jnr van der Linde.**



By 2018, the newly created LFC Logistiek took possession of six Bell 1734AF Haulage Tractors that haul custom-built 55-cubic metre side-tipping tandem trailers that can carry 36 tons of maize. The Bell 1734AF Haulage Tractors ran with a four-cylinder Mercedes Benz engine and Allison transmission and were delivered in a staggered way over six months.

"I'll admit that I had been concerned that the four-cylinder engine was a bit light for the mass that these initial Bell 1734AF Haulage Tractors had to move but they got the job done," says Lourens (Snr). "Their heavy work would be during the two to three winter months when they would haul fully laden trailers to the mill over some 16km for 16 hours a day. In summer, they'd be used to haul water tanks on trailers that would

be used infield for fertilisers and pesticides."

Lourens goes on to explain that the Bell 1734AF Haulage Tractors have different hydraulic configurations enabling them to tip the side-tipping trailers and drive augers that deposit fertiliser into spreaders.

"We had intended to operate the first set of Bell 1734AF Haulage Tractors for 10 years, as we believed that this would ensure a decent return on our investment. However, when Rickus Erasmus told us about the newer-generation Bell 1736AF Haulage Tractor fitted with a 6,8 litre, six-cylinder John Deere engine, we were intrigued," Cobus says. "We then decided to trade in the two oldest machines for two new Bell 1736AF Haulage Tractors, which we received in August 2024, and the difference in performance

has been remarkable from the start."

Now fitted with a John Deere 6068HF285 six-cylinder inline engine that complies with Tier 3/Stage 111A emission certification and delivers 173 horsepower or 129kW, the new generation Bell Haulage Tractor surprised the Van der Linde's in a way they weren't anticipating.

Cobus explains: "In the past, we'd seen the four-cylinder Bell Haulage Tractors running at 0,35km to a litre of diesel or 0,16 of an hour on a litre. Now, this has improved drastically to 0,5km to a litre or 0,23 of an hour, on the same litre of diesel."

"By comparison, the newer Bell 1736AF Haulage Tractor is saving us 43% in fuel alone, which with

today's high fuel prices, is a huge saving."

"The newer six-cylinder Bell 1736AF Haulage Tractor also delivers more torque and the Allison gearbox is proving to be a winner with the operators not missing gears, thus reducing wear and tear on load-

bearing parts by maintaining a smoother passage," he says. "We're also pleased with the odometer that measures both hours and kilometres travelled."

In time, LFC Milling plans to renew its entire fleet of Bell Haulage Tractors with the latest generation

of Bell 1736AFs. As this dynamic, family-run company looks to reduce their production costs, it remains committed to providing essential food to a hungry nation, while navigating pressure on profit margins.

# Bell fleet keeps New Branch growing

*A relatively young timber harvesting contractor operating in Eswatini is the first to admit that his wage bill is that much easier to pay due to the substantial saving in fuel his fleet of four Kobelco Excavators allows him.*

But then JJ Van Schalwyk, the second generation of his clan to have been born and bred in Eswatini, had learnt valuable lessons from his late father Koot Van Schalwyk, who himself had done land preparation for large timber growers' silviculture and traded in wattle.

"I started our company in 2013 doing general transport to and from Eswatini into Gauteng using flatbed trucks," JJ says. "I had also spent some time working for my dad and had traded timber, which is probably where the seed for engaging the timber industry was planted."

JJ and his wife Nicola run the business jointly and with solid academic qualifications of BComm degrees behind them, this dynamic couple is well-equipped to ensure the business runs profitably.



New Branch's first foray into timber harvesting came in 2017 when a local Eswatini timber grower gave out work in project timber areas, which demanded small scale harvesting.

"Our first stop was at Bell Equipment in Matsapha where Charlie Boucher helped us to buy a new Bell 225A Logger with its legendary four-cylinder Deutz engine. Despite the 15 000 hours that this workhorse has gifted us, we have never touched that engine besides servicing it religiously at the recommended frequencies," he says. "We learnt a lot during the three years that we did this work, which involved bush clearing, felling by hand, extracting with a cable-yarder and cross-cutting at roadside."

"We started off conservatively and worked our way up from 500 tons to 1 000 tons a month. During this time, we bought a used Bell 125A Logger and two agricultural tractors from our clients with the latter used for extracting the felled timber, although we soon realised we would have to get specialised equipment for this onerous task."

By now, New Branch's clients noticed that this young company was in it for the long haul and, in what JJ sees as a key moment in their business relationship, his company successfully tendered for a large volume of pine clear-fell.

"We again approached Charlie Boucher at Bell Equipment for advice on excavator carriers with harvesting heads and timber grabs. While the advice we received was valuable for later use, our immediate goal was to source yellow forestry machines that would assist us in meeting huge production targets starting at 8 000 tons a month."

Fortunately, help was at hand as New Branch was able to rent the necessary equipment from a well-known forestry plant hire operator, Gavin Simms.

"Gavin owned the first two Skoggers that Bell Equipment had built. We initially wanted to buy a skidder, but using the two Bell Matriarch Skoggers soon opened our eyes to the versatility of these machines at a much lower running cost," JJ recalls smiling. "After

renting Skogger #1 and #2 for a year, we bought them from Gavin along with six used Bell Loggers. Since then, we have successfully repowered the Skoggers with new engines, pumps, bushes, wiring harnesses and drop-boxes."

The Bell Skoggers have proved invaluable for New Branch as they extract and spread the timber for easy cross-cutting into a multitude of different lengths as determined by the client. The Skoggers, which are able to work independently from traditional choker-men, who would wrap cables around cut timber for extraction by a skidder, can put in a night shift and have a substantial stock of timber ready for chainsaw-bearing cross-cutters starting the day shift.

"The Bell Skogger is ideal for the tree size that we cut, which are trees of between 19 and 22 years and weighing, on average, point 3 of a ton," JJ explains.

"Having grown our fleet of timber-handling machines so dramatically along with our dedicated staff, we were proud to achieve the required 8 000 tons of pine timber



**(From left): Emile van Wyk (Bell Equipment Product Manager: Forestry & Agriculture), Jacobus Van Schalkwyk (Director, New Branch), Nicola Van Schalkwyk (Director, New Branch) and Bruce Larkan (Bell Equipment Swaziland Product Support Representative).**



a month. Since then, we've been able to greatly increase output even peaking to 19 000 tons in some months."

In 2021, New Branch bought the first two of a current fleet of four Kobelco Excavators when they took delivery of a Kobelco SK220XD-10 and a SK135SR-7 Excavator respectively. Prior to delivery, the machines had forestry conversions done by Bell Equipment and were fitted with MT500LB grapples built by Bell.

New Branch's first Kobelco SK135SR-7 Excavator has clocked over 10 000 hours since its acquisition in 2021 and has had its wheel motors and tracks replaced.

"Kobelco Excavators have really made the difference on the log deck where they unload, load, and stack and sort timber while working in tandem with the nimble

Bell Loggers," he continues. "That is why, early in 2024, we took delivery of another Kobelco SK220XD-10 and a SK135SR-7."

JJ continues: "Fuel is traditionally a huge cost factor in any mechanised operation. Our mainstay equipment is all supplied by Bell Equipment and makes for interesting and frugal reading. Our Bell Skoggers run at around eight litres an hour, the Bell Loggers between five and six litres and the Kobelco Excavators at eight to 10 litres for the SK135SR-7 and 10 to 11 litres for SK220XD-10 machines."

"As mentioned before, the saving on diesel we've found with our Kobelco Excavators assists us in keeping our business sustainable."

"It would be amiss not to mention the technical and moral support we receive from Charlie Boucher and his entire team at Bell

Swaziland as they really keep our fleet well-maintained and moving."

The confidence that New Branch has in its fleet of equipment supplied by Bell Equipment is evident as their Bell Logger fleet now stands at nine after acquiring two new Bell 225F Loggers in September 2024, and they received a new Bell Skogger in early March 2025.

New Branch is setting the bar high on timber harvesting and extraction in Eswatini and there seems to be no stopping this dynamic company from progressing. "I must give credit to our New Branch team for their dedication and hard work. Teamwork makes the dream work!" JJ said in closing.

# Heuningneskloof Boerdery invests in a second JCB Loadall

Ever since the Schönfeld farming family – comprising Heinrich and his sons, Hume and Wilhelm – purchased a JCB 531-70 Loadall as a demonstration machine back in 2014, a nagging thought stuck in the back of their minds that perhaps one such handy tool wouldn't be enough on their farm.

The Schönfelds have been farming in the Jongensklip area north of Caledon in the Western Cape's Overberg area since 1986 when Heinrich started on a small patch of land. Heinrich clearly has a feel for the land, its crops and animals as now, some 38 years later, there is much more land under crops and providing fodder for their three point-bred cattle consisting of Limousin and Bonsmara covered by a Sussex bull.

"We cultivate mostly small grain such as canola, barley, wheat and oats here on our farm called

Heuningneskloof," says Wilhelm Schönfeld, the younger of the two brothers. "We also plant silage, which consists of black oats, peas, and vetch with the latter an important crop as it has the ability to return nitrogen to the soil in which it grows.

"We respect our soils and having clean, healthy, and nitrogen-rich soils ensures that we farm sustainably."

The Schönfelds first got the idea of a JCB 531-70 Loadall in 2014 when battling to handle the heavy silage

bales infield as they can weigh anything between 800 and 1 000 kg. The same can be said for bulk bags containing seeds or fertiliser and it was immediately thought that the forks on such a machine would make handling, loading and unloading of such cumbersome items that much quicker, more efficient and certainly safer.

"We found a JCB 531-70 with the supplier of JCB equipment at the time and the machine had clearly been used as a demonstration model as it had some 300 hours on



Hendrie Zeelie, Van Breda Agri Caledon Sales Representative (left), with Wilhelm Schönfeld.

the clock," Wilhelm says. "It was brought to our farm for demonstration purposes and, in short, it never left as we bought it while scratching our heads as to how we could ever have worked without it."

That first JCB 531-70, with its seven-metre-long boom and ability to crab steer, has now clocked over 6 000 hours and is still in daily use, mainly on the silage production areas.

"Since 2022, we noticed that the JCB 531-70 Loadall's tasks just seemed to escalate week by week, as it was almost never stationary," Wilhelm states. "Allow me to sketch a practical example.



We may be busy handling huge bales of silage infield, quite a distance from the farm's warehouse, when a delivery truck of seed or fertiliser in bulk bags would arrive that needs to be offloaded immediately."

According to Wilhelm, that would mean the JCB Loadall operator would interrupt what he was doing infield to drive back to the farm warehouse, offload the truck, stack the bags in the warehouse, and

only then return to the infield task. It was soon clear to see that this arrangement was not working, and the only solution was to get a second similar machine.

"My brother Hume and I researched the market for Loadalls and Telehandlers and chose a particular make, but the supplier didn't have stock and we were desperate for the machine before the next silage harvesting and baling cycle began."

The brothers had heard that the Caledon branch of Van Breda Agri had been appointed as dealers for Bell Equipment's Forestry & Agriculture division and were now the official distributors of JCB Agriculture machinery as well. This meant that Van Breda Agri could get a JCB 530-70 Loadall to Heuningneskloof as a demonstration machine and, much like its predecessor, it ran on the farm for two weeks and never left.

"We had spoken to Van Breda Agri's Sales Representative, Hendrie Zeelie, and he told us the happy news of a financing incentive with a local banking group, which we jumped at. In the process we saved ourselves R800 000 on the price of the competitor machine."

Now the JCB 530-70 Loadall sees duty loading wrapped silage bags

into a feed mixer for the cattle, unloading seed bags from suppliers and stacking these in the warehouse where its seven-metre boom shows good reach under a load. On the day of our visit, the forks had been swapped for a grain-bucket and with the bucket having ground-engaging-tools, the machine was used to backfill holes where Eucalyptus trees had been felled and de-stumped.

"Having two such versatile machines on the farm has opened doors for us and important tasks no longer have to be interrupted, which lets us concentrate on the modern trend of precision farming," Wilhelm says. "We're also confident that with Van Breda Agri taking care of the machines in Caledon, which is virtually on our doorstep, we'll be assured of many hours of sustained service from our JCB Loadalls."



**The JCB 530-70 Loadall fitted with ground-engaging tools to backfill holes.**

# Enterprising Eswatini women create opportunity with a Bell Slew Loader

*Inhabitants of the Sigangeni community in the northwest of Eswatini traditionally grow their maize between October and May of the following year when it is harvested. The area lies adjacent the Mpumalanga Highveld of South Africa and has winters that are too cold for cash crops like cabbages that could bring in essential additional income, so a group of enterprising ladies devised an ambitious plan.*

Phindile Mbuyisa explains: "We have always planted our maize in October after the first rains and harvested it in May, but then had to wait for it to dry properly by August before selling the surplus that we could not consume ourselves. This created hardships amongst us, but through my work as a rural health motivator I heard from other motivators from the Northern Hhohho region that there was a shortage of cane loaders in the sugar industry."

By accessing the country's Regional Development Fund (RDF), the group sought to acquire a Bell UltECO6 Cane Slew Loader.

The RDF is a funding programme initiated by King Mswati III to eradicate poverty in his country. It entails people forming a group and depositing funds into a collective account to save towards a 10% deposit of the purchase price of a piece of mechanised equipment, or any approved business that could be utilised by the group at their place of preference.

The Inkhundla system – Eswatini's traditional local government structure that plays a key role in community leadership and service delivery at grassroots level – then funds the balance of 90% and owns the equipment but allows the members of the group to earn an income from the equipment's use.

"During one of the workshops I attended, I had heard that everyone was buying trucks in this manner and that there were

already too many trucks," Phindile continues. "What they did need, however, was loading equipment to load the sugar cane infield and I took this information back to the group we had loosely formed in our area."

The group created a formal structure under the banner of Sigangeni Vusumnotfo Multi-Purpose Cooperative, consisting of 12 women and two men who committed to the plan by having enough capital to spare, gleaned from their maize sales. It was not a given that their proposal would be successful, but they did some intensive research and drafted a viable business plan, with valuable help on how to start a business from Mr Vusi 'Futis' Dlamini, a local businessman.

Phindile was elected as chairperson of the group and was assisted by fellow board members, Thembe Thwala, and one of the only two men in the group, Sibusiso Dlamini. She continues: "We all started contributing to our fund in 2021 when we could sell our surplus maize to the Eswatini National Maize Corporation and to companies making animal feeds."

During this time the group also discovered which companies sold sugar cane loading equipment. This brought them to Bell Equipment's door in Matsapha where they met Bell Swaziland Branch Manager, Charlie Boucher, and the local Bell Product Support Representative, Bruce Larkan.

"Both Charlie and Bruce patiently explained to us what they thought we needed, as they understood the concept. Bruce speaks fluent Siswati, which made the explanation so much clearer, allowing us to grasp the facts in our own language – something we really appreciated," Phindile says. "More importantly though is the fact that we were taken seriously and not viewed as a group of rural people with an impossible dream."

Board member, Thembe Thwala, adds that Bell Equipment's pricing on a Bell UltECO6 Slew Cane Loader fitted their business plan and they told their group that they should be able to reach the required deposit by 2023.

Next, the group approached their local Siphocosini Inkhundla led by Hon. Mduduzi Matsebula, the member of parliament, together with his team, the Indvuna yenkhundla Gcinmuzi Mavimbela and Bucopho Thamie Shongwe, who then approached the RDF with their proposal, amongst others. The business plan, coupled with the fact that they had the required deposit, worked in their favour and the deal was settled between the RDF and Bell Equipment.

"There was much joy on the Inkhundla land when the Bell UltECO6 Slew Cane Loader was delivered in April 2024," Phindile recalls. "We sourced four operators with some experience from outside and employed them after they had received training from Bruce Larkan. 25 April 2024 was a

momentous day for our group when the Bell UltECO6 Slew Cane Loader started earning an income for us."

As the machine would be owned by the government, it was stipulated in the tender that a Bell Care Package over 24 months should be included in the warranty of the same length. It also included a set of tools that would be needed to service and repair the machine.

"The income from the use of the machine gets paid into a bank account. After a mere five months we had enough money saved to put down a deposit on a van to service the UltECO6 with fuel, lubricants, and personnel, as we had appointed a supervisor and use additional manual labour to

pick up bits of dropped sugar cane," Phindile continues. "The operators have a daily pre-start checklist and we're very strict on the daily maintenance of the machine to ensure its longevity."

The Sigangeni Vusumnotfo Multi-Purpose Cooperative's Bell UltECO6 Slew Cane Loader is used around the clock with two shifts and typically loads between 12 to 18 trucks in a 24-hour cycle. Most trucks carry 30 tons of cane and the UltECO6 loads around 45 tons in an hour. In this way, it has already clocked more than 2 000 hours. Its diesel consumption of five litres an hour also fits the business plan of the group.

"We've enjoyed the support from Bell Equipment especially when it comes to servicing the machine,"

says board member, Sibusiso Dlamini. "We give Bell advance notice of about 50 hours, and they always arrive at the appointed time and with the correct service kits and lubricants, which gives us peace of mind."

While the cane harvesting season is relatively short, covering only 8,5 months of the year, the income the group has derived from this first cane loader cannot be underestimated. The pride in her manner is evident as Phindile explains that, looking forward to the next cutting season, the group is seriously considering acquiring a second UltECO6 Slew Cane Loader from Bell Equipment – this time financing and owning it themselves. Given their determination, we have no doubt that this will happen.



**Sigangeni Vusumnotfo Multi-Purpose Cooperative's board members (from left): Phindile Mbuyisa, Sibusiso Dlamini and Thembe Thwala.**

# Bell Skogger is game changer for Harding timber contractor

*When Wes Redinger started doing contract timber harvesting for one of the largest timber growers in South Africa, he did it with manual labour. His young company, called Whisky Valley, had three chainsaw operators who did the felling while manual extraction and loading the three-metre timber lengths onto tractor-trailer combinations by hand was the order of the day. It was, however, not sustainable.*



"We had started felling our own Eucalyptus on our farm using one and later two chainsaws and we thought we could master another skillset to add to our income," Wes tells us. "Working with real production targets though, we saw almost immediately that we'd need to mechanise, and do that quickly to offer our clients a sustained service."

Wes and his wife, Kira, live on a farm in the Harding district of Southern KwaZulu-Natal and, having both grown up there, the couple has become passionate about growing timber. Kira's father, Jon McKenzie, is a well-known farmer and former NCT 'Farmer of the Year' recipient in the area and Wes keenly acknowledges and values the continuous mentoring he receives from his father-in-law.

"Our timber-growing clients had started growing gum around eight years ago. Their thinnings regime would see the first thinnings at six years, again at 12 to 13 years, with harvesting at 18 to 20 years. We had a lot to consider when

harvesting for them, such as getting the wet and slippery felled timber out of the compartment before it dried out too much, especially when it was peeled timber – meaning the bark has been taken off. This timber is meant for export to the Far East."

Wes explains that the impact of machines on the soil was also an important environmental factor as the timber growing companies adhere to strict environmental guidelines under the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC). Given the steep terrain around the Weza area, where the harvesting was taking place, Wes realised they needed a special machine with enough power to extract timber quickly and efficiently while having a low ground impact and the ability to stack and load as well.

"I initially thought to attach a rotating timber grab to a telehandler and replace the standard tyres with high-flotation tyres to lower the ground impact. This idea stuck in my head until I found something unique on the

internet – the Bell Skogger. By this time our harvesting contract had solidified, and we were under pressure to perform."

Wes knew Keith Milne, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative working out of Pietermaritzburg, and a call to Keith confirmed that the Bell Skogger was indeed all it promised to be.

"As this was a new concept, and something certainly never seen in our area, there was a bit of skepticism all round, which is quite natural, but I was convinced this was the right tool for our application," Wes says. "My own father, Dieter, who has a wealth of knowledge regarding mechanics and can often see elements in the design and build of a machine, accompanied me on a trip to the Bell factory at Richards Bay. After he had inspected the Skogger up close, he gave it a big thumbs-up in terms of its solid design, build and all-round safety features. With his 'out of the box' thinking, he approaches mechanical challenges differently to what a

farmer may do and to have the privilege of some of that knowledge injected into my agricultural systems can only spell positive things."

Wes and Jon discussed the pros and cons of the Bell Skogger in their application at length and placed the order for the machine in July 2023, which was subsequently delivered the following month. A challenge then was to find an operator young enough to grasp the new technology. In the end, Wes settled on Mbusane Nkomo, who had operated a timber forwarder before and was used to joystick controls.

"Whenever Mbusane is on lunch, I'm happy to hop into the Skogger and operate it. I absolutely love the feel of its power and agile manoeuvrability, especially under a load," Wes adds, smiling broadly.

We asked Wes whether the Skogger has made a difference to their harvesting and

extraction operations and performance. "As soon as the operator, Mbusane, felt more at home in the Skogger and started operating it instinctively, the change in our performance was most noticeable. We now have seven chainsaw gangs that fell, debark and de-branch the timber and present it for full mechanised extraction," says Wes.

"It has further taken away two tractor-trailer units and eight manual labourers who can be deployed in meaningful roles elsewhere. But most importantly, it has secured consistent volume, which is the main thing in contract harvesting. That is how one's production is best measured."

Wes and his clients are especially pleased with the Skogger's low ground impact and all-wheel drive traction. Its performance is not hampered by wet weather and where larger machines are invariably stopped in rain, the Skogger soldiers on as there is hardly any soil disturbance.

"We mentioned the Skogger's manoeuvrability earlier on and this is particularly evident due to its articulation that allows the machine to move through 3x3 planting spaces and not damage any trees on its way through. And then to cap it all, it does all this while only using between seven and eight litres of diesel an hour, which has a real and positive impact on our bottom line.

"I should add that timber harvesting is but one aspect of our farming operation. While it offers a fun learning curve and helps to spread the risk, it is teaching us new skills all the time, and as we learn more about what the Skogger can do," Wes says, smiling. "It's also made a lot of people in this area incredibly curious. We're forever passing acquaintances and strangers on our way to the harvesting area who have come to look at how our Skogger performs in this challenging environment, which is good for growing timber but tough on man and machine."



**Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Keith Milne (left), with Wes Redinger from Whisky Valley in Harding.**

# Goobs Forestry loads up on Bell and Kobelco for timber loading contract

*When Simphiwe Magubane got his application and motivation in at the last minute for an internship that would include tertiary education at a forestry college, little could he know how his concerted effort would change his life for the better.*

Simphiwe hails from a small village called eMakhwabe which lies between Vryheid and Paulpietersburg in Northern KwaZulu-Natal. When he matriculated at the Mantshinga Combined School in Paulpietersburg in 2007, there was no money for him to continue his education and he worked for a while as an intern with a large

timber, pulp, and paper company, the same company that would later sponsor his tertiary education in forestry.

"I was fortunate enough to gain a bursary to study forestry at Saasveld and having worked in the field for almost a year before getting there, I had a far better understanding of many forestry methods and operations prior to studying," he says. "When I

qualified after three years of study, I embarked on working back the time with my sponsoring company, which added to my experience."

This saw Simphiwe start as a forester-in-training and with hard and diligent work, he was soon promoted to forester and a permanent appointment.

"I literally started at the bottom of the tree-growing value chain with seed to seedlings in the tree

nursery and learnt a lot about silviculture practices which is basically planting, maintenance, and protecting of your compartments for about nine years depending on your location and targeted product," he says. "After four years, I was moved into harvesting as a harvesting forester and was promoted to harvesting manager in 2017. While I so enjoyed all aspects of the learning experience, it was during this stint in harvesting that the idea of being self-employed in some branch of the value chain started taking shape in my mind."

In April 2021, Simphiwe registered his own company with a derivative of his surname Magubane into Goobs Forestry (Pty) Ltd.

"I am grateful for the mentoring that I received from Hendrik Steenekamp, who is an established and well-respected contractor in the Piet Retief area, when he invited me to work with him on an

extraction contract for a timber-growing company," Simphiwe adds. "I learnt a lot about the business side of contracting from Hendrik."

Then a contract was advertised to load rail trucks at a railway siding in Paulpietersburg from where the timber is railed to a large pulp and paper mill in Richards Bay. Simphiwe tendered successfully and with a solid five-year contract in hand, he could approach financial institutions for financing to buy timber handling equipment.

A business consulting agent assisted Simphiwe by using selected business tools, training, interventions, and coaching, to improve his business position and ultimately maintain a leading edge in the forestry industry. "They really want you to succeed and offer financial assistance and advice all along the way, which is really commendable and greatly appreciated," he says.

"It was about then that I met Daniel van Huyssteen, Bell Equipment's experienced Sales Representative, and himself a qualified forester. His advice has been so valuable. We started with 22 people and three rented Bell Loggers and, in time, I obtained finance to buy the equipment that Daniel had suggested – a new Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator fitted with a Bell 800 Timber Grab and a used Bell 225F Logger with low hours."

As the Kobelco Excavator would be running mainly on concrete, rubber pads from a third-party supplier were fitted to the metal tracks to save both the tracks and the concrete from damage. The machines were delivered in November 2022 and put straight to work on the rail siding on the outskirts of Paulpietersburg.

"The contract had initially called for the use of two excavators, but as the rail service wasn't consistent



up to that point, and the volumes we were loading were not at full capacity, I held back on acquiring a second Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator until the rail service and volumes were more settled," Simphiwe explains. "Towards the end of September 2023 this was the case, and I ordered another Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator from Bell Equipment."

Simphiwe explains how the three lines of rail trucks work. One line contains 19 trucks, another 18, and a third eight trucks. The two Kobelco Excavators load the longer lines of trucks and the Bell Logger the short line of eight trucks.

"As much as we admire the agility of the Bell Logger, the Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavators with the larger Bell 800 timber grabs really perform well in this application and outload the smaller Logger with much less operator fatigue. The Kobelcos easily load around 75 tons of timber an hour while the Bell Logger, which is smaller, gets to 37 tons, which is still good considering its size. Also, these will differ greatly depending where you are on the value chain."

"The use of the Kobelco Excavators has really made a difference to this loading operation with a huge saving on fuel consumption, which sees neither we nor our clients

complaining," Simphiwe says. "The use of the Kobelco Excavators ensures productivity and meeting our client's key performance indicators."

Simphiwe is also full of praise for the service he has received from the Bell Equipment branch in Piet Retief where the Mechanic, Stefan, and the Parts Specialist, Qiniso, really make his life easier with solid maintenance and having the correct parts and service kits without fail.



**Simphiwe Magubane, owner of Goobs Forestry (Pty) Ltd, showing the rubber pads on the tracks of the Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator.**

# Swartland farmer swears by his new JCB 541-70 Loadall

*It is often said that people buy from people and not from companies and this was certainly the case recently when a well-known farmer in the Western Cape's Swartland region chose to buy a new loading tool from a dealer he knew personally.*

Deon Steyn and his son, Jordaan, farm the land they call Onverwags and have done so since Deon and his father, Hendrik, bought the farm in 1989. The farm is situated near Hermon, which lies between Wellington and Malmesbury. The area is known for its wheat and canola cultivation, and they do just that along with oats, red and white wine grapes, and soft citrus mandarins. They also keep cattle for the beef market and sell their wine grapes to the local co-operative.

A further cash crop they do is selling bales of hay, and this is where their specialist loading tool comes into its own, as Deon explains: "We have a contractor to bale and transport the bales of hay which are sold to the dairy industry but we have to stack the bales, and for this we use our new JCB 541-70 Loadall," he says. "Before this present machine, we had another similar one but from a different manufacturer."



When it came to replacing it, we were quite particular about what we expected of such a machine's capability."

Despite having a large fleet of agricultural tractors to haul trailers and implements, Deon prefers to keep things simple and not use two machines when one could be adequate.

"The JCB Loadall is a wonderfully versatile machine, but when we use it for handling 1-ton bulk bags of fertiliser infield, where it unloads them or lifts them up to feed fertiliser into the fertiliser spreader, we would expect this machine to have hauled the trailer containing the bulk bags of fertiliser to the land," Deon explains. "This is no mean feat as the fully laden trailer often comes in at 25 tons, but we've found the JCB 541-70 Loadall manages it well.

"Allow me though to backtrack a bit and tell you our reasoning for buying the particular JCB 541-70 Loadall and not the slightly smaller 530-70 machine, which is said to contain many specifications for use

in agriculture," Deon says. "As mentioned, we needed a powerful machine that could haul a trailer, but we also needed a machine that would be stable and, therefore, ensure safe working practices when lifting two 1-ton bulk bags of fertiliser to a height of five metres, which is what this JCB 541-70 Loadall can do.

"But those are not the only reasons for buying the JCB 541-70 Loadall as any piece of mechanical equipment is only as good as the technical support we appreciate when it needs to be maintained or repaired," he adds. "We bought this particular JCB Loadall because Weskus Meganisatie in Malmesbury, and more specifically its owner, Nicky Russouw, is the dealer for the JCB range of machines under the Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture banner. Knowing Nicky personally on many levels, we knew we could rely on him and his team for solid support with a complete parts holding."

Deon is full of praise for the JCB 541-70 Loadall's ability to steer with

all four wheels, especially when stacking items in tight spaces in farm sheds. "We're aware that the machine can crab-steer as well, but we don't have much use for that feature," he says. "What we do enjoy though are the interchangeable tools like the large grain bucket that is also used to handle chicken manure, and even the smaller standard bucket, although we appreciate that the latter is not meant to be a digging tool.

"We've designed our own fork attachment with a 'quick-hitch' fitting for handling the hay bales and with these bales weighing as much as 675kg each, the JCB Loadall easily picks up three at one time and stacks or loads them safely. Another attachment we designed and find handy is a push-blade fitted to the boom that we use to stockpile grain in our shed."

The four trained operators that use the JCB 541-70 Loadall all report that the controls are responsive with quick hydraulic reactions. They've found the machine's

controls to be user-friendly and enjoy the reversible fan that blows out the chaff and dust, which is especially prevalent when loading and unloading grain. The tyres fitted to the JCB Loadall are soft on the concrete floors of the sheds and loading platforms at Onverwags and don't cause scuffing or damage to the surfaces. Daily maintenance is made easier with all the grease nipples centred in one area.

"Buying this JCB 541-70 Loadall has been a good experience for us all round, from pleasant dealings with Weskus Meganisatie and the financial incentive and assistance that JCB offered with ABSA Bank, to the machine's performance on the farm where it is used every day," Deon concludes. "In the time that we've had it, it's worked just under 700 hours and with average diesel consumption of only six litres an hour we can't complain given the many different tasks it fulfils on the farm."



**MD of Weskus Meganisatie, Nicky Russouw (left) with Deon Steyn, owner of the farm Onverwags.**



# Kobelco SK220XD-10 solves ZD Stander's double handling challenge

*When a Knysna-based contract timber harvester found that using a truck-mounted crane to load cut-to-length timber from one truck to another for transport to a sawmill was resulting in time-consuming double handling, he turned to Bell Equipment for a solution.*

The company, ZD Stander Transport, has roots going back to the 1800s according to Riaan Stander, son of its founder, the late Zacharias Daniel Stander. "Our family's forebears were linked to the woodcutters referred to in Dalene Matthee's well-known novel 'Circles in a Forest' ('Kringe in 'n Bos')", Riaan says. "They had apparently felled trees and transported the timber by ox wagon to supply the former GEO Parkes sawmill in the Knysna area."

Riaan's father, ZD Stander, started his own transport company in 1989, transporting timber for a large sawmill near Knysna and this service soon grew to include pine timber coming from the Gouna, Buffelsnek,

and Goudveld areas around Knysna. By 1991, ZD Stander Transport started sourcing timber from private farm plantations where trees were felled with chainsaws, extracted using tractors, and stacked manually.

"I joined the business in 1993 after finishing school and started as a truck driver while learning about mechanical things as a sideline, which resulted in me later building timber trailers with cranes mounted on them," Riaan says. "Our business was growing steadily but stacking the timber by hand was slow and backbreaking until we bought our first new Bell 120A Logger in 1996."

Riaan's son, Zach, named after his grandfather, has also just joined the business.

Riaan recalls that his late dad was so concerned that they wouldn't be able to obtain financing for the Bell 120A Logger, which in 1996 cost R170 000, that he wanted to return the machine to Bell Equipment, but fortunately they were able to get the machine financed.

"That machine is still in daily use although it has been rebuilt and sports a new engine," Riaan explains. "Our fleet of Bell Loggers now numbers 13 machines and spans model numbers across the 120, 220 and 225A ranges."

While the nimble Bell Loggers were working well when sorting and stacking timber on loading zones and roadside depots, it was the loading of the cut timber onto trucks for the longer hauls to the mills that was time-consuming due to the double handling caused by first loading it onto a truck that had



a mounted crane and then using that same crane to then load the long-haul truck.

"We were pretty desperate for a quicker loading tool as this double handling was negatively affecting the volumes we were tasked with moving," Riaan adds. "We had, in 2018, tried using a used excavator fitted with a grapple but the machine didn't last."

Riaan goes on to say that Tom Swartz, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative based in Gqeberha, formerly Port Elizabeth, had been calling on them since 2019. Once they had concluded their own research across the wider excavator market, where they had read and heard positive reports about Kobelco Excavators, they turned to Tom for assistance.

"We were comfortable speaking to Tom and Bell Equipment as we've enjoyed great service from the company with repairs, servicing and parts availability for our Bell Loggers emanating from both the Bell Equipment branches in Gqeberha and George," Riaan

says. "Tom, with his excellent product knowledge, was quick to confirm our already positive thoughts on the merits of the Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator and recommended that we fit the durable Bell MT600TB timber grab and the Bell Forestry Conversion Kit, which we did when deciding on the machine."

Riaan and his team took delivery of the Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator with its Bell MT600TB Timber Grab and safety-ensuring Bell Forestry Conversion Kit, which includes a bullet-proof windscreen, in April 2024. The machine's presence made an almost immediate impact on speeding up the loading of long-haul trucks and so shortening turnaround times.

"We're very pleased with the quicker loading and subsequent turnaround times the Kobelco Excavator has brought about," Riaan says. "An average load of timber on a truck comes in at 33 cubic metres and this used to take us three hours, but we've drastically cut down that time to between 30 and 45 minutes, which

is a huge improvement on the time management of our fleet of trucks considering the haul to George is over 100km away."

Riaan is full of praise for the efficiency of the Kobelco SK220XD-10 as a loading tool. "With its excellent hydraulic flows, this machine doesn't seem to labour at all. With its current use it only works for around five hours a day, so we haven't yet accurately monitored its fuel consumption, but with what we've seen thus far, it seems to be very economical.

"Because so much of our felling and extraction happens in difficult terrain with challenging topography where only shovel yarders and large skidders work efficiently, it's like a breath of fresh air to find that the loading of the timber product, which is sent on the longest leg of our responsibility, is happening smoothly, efficiently and, above all, safely. And for this we can thank a Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator supplied by Bell Equipment."



**(From left): Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Tom Swartz, and Riaan Stander, owner of ZD Transport, with his son, Zach.**





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# New Bell 2006AF Haulage Tractor delivers more power, more payload

*Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture is introducing the higher-powered Series V Haulage Tractor, the 2006AF – a robust 200hp (149kW) workhorse – in response to market demand for a more powerful machine capable of hauling a larger payload.*

The Series V leans heavily on Bell Equipment's tried and tested haulage tractor heritage, with its unique characteristics that make it a better tool for haulage than a typical agricultural ploughing tractor. The fabricated steel chassis, heavy duty rear axle and hitch positioning ahead of the axle centre line, for improved load transfer, steering and traction when trailers are fully loaded have all been retained along with key safety features, such as the ROPS/FOPS certified cab and pneumatic trailer braking.

The current range consists of the smaller 140hp (104kW) Bell 1406A and 1406AF models as well as the 173hp (129kW) Bell 1736A and 1736AF, where 'A' and 'AF' denote 2WD and 4WD configurations respectively.

According to Bell Equipment Product Manager, Emile van Wyk, the 4WD Bell 2006AF boasts a 15% power increase over the 173hp (129kW) units. "We've built the 2006AF on the trusted and proven Series V platform, so it maintains all that our customers have become accustomed to in our Haulage

Tractors. Plus, more power means the engine doesn't work as hard to haul its load, which carries numerous operational benefits," he explains.

Driven by the 6.8l John Deere engine, it provides 785Nm of torque through the Allison automatic transmission, enabling it to comfortably haul on-road at speeds of up to 40km/h. And, like the other models, the engine achieves Tier 3 emissions certification without the need for a complex exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) system.

According to Emile, the 2006AF has rear disc brakes for more efficient braking and handles undulating terrain with ease thanks to the automatic 4x4 feature that detects wheelspin and engages 4x4 until grip is restored and disengages again.

"One of our prototypes has clocked over 5 000 hours hauling 40t loads of timber for a Namibian biomass customer. It travels for distances up to 65km at a time and has been reported to be the best machine on site."



# Skogger and Kobelco provide ideal forestry solutions for Dendotron



When considering the volumes that a contract timber harvester working in pine thinnings in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg area must produce, he is adamant that two Bell Skoggers would be more productive and cost effective than two larger and more powerful skidders.

Christopher le Roux and Andrew Flavell are business partners in the contract timber harvesting company, Dendotron Contracting (Pty) Ltd. The seeds for Christopher's career in forestry and timber were almost literally sown by his father, Bruce, when the latter worked in silviculture for a multinational wood processing group while his son was still at school.

"I learnt a lot from my dad, for which I'm grateful. I started off in silviculture in the Greytown area in 2009 and when a silviculture contract ended, I was approached to do contract timber harvesting, which seemed almost like a natural progression," he says. "I started off conservatively, working with one Bell 225A Logger and an agricultural tractor and

trailer combination, which hauled cut timber from a gum clear-felling operation to roadside depots."

Through hard work and dedication, Christopher added two more Bell Loggers to his fleet along with more agricultural tractor-trailer combinations. Meeting and exceeding his production targets soon got noticed and the awarding of a thinnings contract in the Giant's Castle area near the Drakensberg in 2020, led to a partnership with the name of Dendotron Contracting (Pty) Ltd.

"The naming of our company Dendotron happened through us buying a shelf-company of that name and the irony is that 'Dendo', in Latin, pertains to an

evergreen tree of the Ebony family," Christopher tells us. "The thinnings contract in the Giant's Castle area is done on a motor-manual basis with felling and crosscutting by hand and extraction, stacking and loading done mechanically.

"From the outset, we put our trust in Bell 225A Loggers as the industry-standard for this type of timber-handling machine. Not only are they durable with their simple design and quality in build, but they, almost equally importantly, hold their value for a very long time and fetch good prices when sold on."

Being energetic and ambitious by nature, Christopher and Andrew cast their contract harvesting net



**Bell Sales Representative, Keith Milne (left), with Christopher le Roux, partner in Dendotron Contracting (Pty) Ltd.**

beyond South Africa's borders and landed a thinnings contract in 2024 for the largest timber processing company in neighbouring Eswatini. This contract evolved into a clear-felling contract with the thinnings contract being fully mechanised and the clear-felling contract, motor-manual.

"We had, by this stage, expanded our fleet of mechanised

equipment to include excavators with harvesting heads, grapple skidders, forwarders and newer Bell 225F Loggers, although we're actually using our original Bell 225A Loggers at the thinning contracts in Eswatini," Christopher says.

"This left us somewhat depleted mechanically at the Giant's Castle

operation, but an efficient solution was soon found."

Working with Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Keith Milne, from the company's Customer Service Centre in Pietermaritzburg, Christopher and Andrew enquired about the Bell Skogger as a viable solution to Dendotron's extraction

challenges in their local thinnings operation.

"With Keith's extensive product knowledge and talking to other Skogger owners, we knew that this was the machine best suited for extraction and indexing at our thinnings operation in KwaZulu-Natal, and we took delivery of

such a machine in September 2024," Christopher recalls.

"Our present Skogger operator comes with skidder experience, and he took to the Bell Skogger smoothly. He is further aided by the client's harvesting manager, who hails from Mbombela, where he

learnt firsthand how to achieve best production figures with this innovative machine."

"The Bell Skogger is super-efficient and easily bunches small, felled trees that it then extracts effortlessly. When you consider that purpose-built forestry equipment is



traditionally very expensive, especially when small volumes of such machines are sold, the Skogger, at less than half the price of a traditional skidder, certainly breaks this mould. The same goes for its fuel consumption at between eight and nine litres an hour and services, which are far more reasonably priced. With all these positives considered, a second Bell Skogger would really see us moving swiftly ahead." At Dendotron Contracting's two operations in Eswatini, the

combination of thinnings and clear-felling helps the company to fulfill its production targets. When we visited the clear-felling operation, the need for more mechanisation was soon evident by the sheer volume of gum timber that had been felled and needed to be indexed, stacked and loaded into trucks for transport to the mill.

"We soon realised that we needed a larger and more efficient loading and stacking tool at the Eswatini

clear-felling operation and here we approached Bell Swaziland, which is so ably led by Charlie Boucher and his team," he explains. "Again, we relied on Bell Equipment's excellent product knowledge and experience, with Charlie recommending a Kobelco SK220XD Excavator carrier with the Bell forestry conversion and a Bell MT601 grab, which offers 0,6 square metres of capacity in the 20-ton class."

Since its delivery in early January 2025, the Kobelco SK220XD-based timber machine works on the landing where it lays timber, stacks, and indexes it, and then loads it onto trucks. It has proved itself to be the only machine that can effectively work in the wet and, with the long reach its boom offers when slewing, it rarely has to move on its tracks, making for stable and safe operation.

"This machine is so new we haven't yet calculated its precise

fuel consumption, but all indications show that it fits the business plan perfectly with room to spare." Christopher says. "We're also putting in extra effort in getting local Eswatini operators trained so that we fulfill our company's undertaking of upliftment through skills transfer to leave a lasting legacy.

"We've enjoyed the sales experience when acquiring new machines from Bell Equipment in both South Africa and Eswatini and

the service we receive from the company's maintenance teams in both these places is probably the best in the industry.

"Looking ahead we see full mechanisation as the way to go as we can be really competitive both in price and performance. When doing that, Bell Equipment is sure to be our first port of call."



# Skoggers are the extraction tool of choice for J&B Timbers

*Bell Equipment is one of the few original equipment manufacturers that listen to the all-important feedback it gets from the field where its equipment works and then, most importantly, uses that information to make improvements to its machines.*

These are the words of Barend Steenkamp, part of the fifth generation of farmers adding value to the Eswatini economy, South Africa's closest eastern neighbour. The Steenkamps farm beef and mutton in the Sicunusa area in the west of the country and have embarked on contract timber harvesting under the banner of J&B Timbers since 2010.

"We had started off conservatively and, as our experience and fleet of timber handling equipment grew, we soon realised that to achieve the challenging production targets our clients had set us, we'd need more sophisticated equipment for extracting timber efficiently and above all, safely," Barend

says. "This solution we found when we bought our first Bell Skogger back in 2017, which was the third such machine to roll off the then Matriarch production line."

J&B Timbers has subsequently bought Bell Skoggers at regular intervals with their second machine arriving in 2019 (Serial #10), a third in 2020 (Serial #13) and a fourth in 2024 (Serial #58).

"Since we started in 2010, the job hasn't changed, although we no longer undertake thinnings or the harvesting of whole tree lengths. Now it's all clear-felling and mostly in pine, but it's still a motor-manual operation as our chainsaw operators in felling and cross-cutting are efficient and experienced."

The pine trees that J&B Timbers harvest are mostly between 18 and 20 years old with volumes of approximately 0,3 cubic metre of utilisable timber. Two tree-fellers with chainsaws work in a team with a Skogger and the machine is also used for final extraction when timber is initially hauled in using a shovel-yarder.

into three sections and will make for easier maintenance.

"Other standout features on the Skogger are the differentials that are big and strong and the same type that is fitted to Bell Equipment's tough B20E Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs). We also enjoy the grapple and its rotator. Although they bear the brunt of the heavy loads when the machine is working, their longevity is something to behold."

According to Barend, the Skogger's hydrostatic drivetrain with its built-in limiter prevents the machine's wheels from spinning and, given the often treacherous underfoot conditions in Eswatini's forest compartments due to high summer rainfall, this feature presents a real winner. The standard tyres that the machines are bought with generally give service up to 5 000 hours and considering the terrain they work in, negotiating tree stumps and rocks, that is seen as remarkable.

"Our first Skogger from 2017, now stands at 23 000 hours and had its engine replaced at 12 000, although the original engine was then used in another machine,"

Barend says. "We will, however, take the older machine to our farm where it will be completely refurbished replacing pins, bushes, the valve bank and the articulation infrastructure. There will also be some minor panel-beating and respraying as working in the forestry compartments doesn't come without scrapes.

"We consider that our faith in the Bell Skogger as a primary extraction tool is evident in the four machines that we have," Barend says. "These four machines would, however, not be as productive were they not maintained properly and for that we have to thank Charlie Boucher and his dedicated team at Bell Swaziland for their attentive service, great parts holding, and general all-round caring attitude."

"We only use original parts from Bell Equipment and don't skimp on service intervals. The same goes for all the other equipment we own that is supplied by Bell, which includes two Kobelco SK260LC-10 and three SK210LC Excavators, the four Bell Skoggers and eight Bell Loggers."

"Our target for each Skogger is to extract and place 600 trees in a shift and this also accounts for working at night as with two operators to each machine, we deploy our Skoggers in a night shift from Monday to Thursday," Barend explains. "The Skoggers have good lighting and can place logs neatly to be ready when the manual chainsaw teams arrive for the day shift."

"The MT500LB Grapple is an ideal size for us as our operators aim to grab full loads of timber and with the Skogger's excellent hydraulic flows, there is a good balance between the power the engine delivers and the grapple."

To ensure safety, J&B Timbers' Bell Skoggers operate in only two of the available three working modes namely 'Tortoise' and 'Snail', opting to disable the 'Hare' setting.

"We've been very pleased that Bell Equipment has taken to heart the feedback that we, as experienced Skogger operators, give them," Barend continues. "The newly designed propshaft with its carrier bearing installed is a big improvement as it is now split



**(From left): Emile van Wyk (Product Manager, Bell Equipment), Bertus Potgieter (Operations Manager, J&B Timbers), Barend Steenkamp (owner, J&B Timbers), Sandile Sam Mabuza (Harvesting Manager, J&B Timbers) and Bruce Larkan (Customer Support Representative, Bell Equipment).**

# Jetteson Timbers invests in four new Bell Loggers



*Nestled in the picturesque KwaZulu-Natal Midlands area of Karkloof is Jetteson Timbers, a quintessential family-owned and operated business. At the helm is Brendon Raw, who is living proof that hard work creates opportunity and you don't have to be booksmart to be successful.*

Brendon grew up in Karkloof, outside Howick, where his parents owned 90 hectares of land with a trading store. He had always been drawn to the practicalities of life rather than scholarly pursuits, so after completing school and his army conscription he was eager to

start working. He began running the family trading store with Ninette, whom he had met during his time in the army, and later married.

The partnership has been incredibly fruitful as they have

grown an impressive business while raising a family. Their daughter, Justine, now lives in the Cape and works as a marketer in the wine industry. Hayden, their son, is completing a BCom Business Management degree and has recently moved home to work as a

Junior Manager at Jetteson Timbers.

Brendon recalls that an opportunity to fell wattle for two farmers got him involved in timber contracting, starting out with only a chainsaw and tractor. "We grew from there into a reasonable contracting business that, at one stage, was harvesting 10 000t of timber per month, running a day and a night shift, seven days a week. It was nightmare stuff.

"Then I started sawmilling in a small way about 20 years ago, and that grew and overtook the contracting business. We phased out contracting and started buying blocks of timber and harvesting for our own sawmill."

Today, the company employs about 130 people and does everything in-house, including transporting their own timber and finished products. Controlling every aspect of the business simplifies life,

which Brendon says is "challenging enough with everything we do". The harvesting business still supplies the sawmill, but Jetteson Timbers now owns about 2 500 hectares of land and grows its own timber on 1 000 hectares of gum and pine plantations. This comprises Tweefontein farm in the Karkloof area and two farms further away in the Kamberg.

The mill processes about 65 cubic metres of pine per day, which

includes both structural and industrial pine. All the timber is kiln dried and the industrial timber for pallets is sold in Pietermaritzburg, Cato Ridge and, to a lesser degree, Durban. About 80% of the structural timber products are sold to Timber Solutions in Howick, which Brendon started 12 years ago and later sold to his nephew, who has built up the business. Gum is sold to a veneer plant in Estcourt.

Brendon's relationship with Bell goes way back. "It's probably been 25 years since I bought my first Bell Tri-Wheeler for timber contracting," he says. "For a long time now, we've had nine in our fleet and that just works for us. Four of them work at the sawmill and five are on the farms."

The four new Bell 225F Loggers were purchased to replace old

A-series machines that were around 15 to 18 years old and had clocked between 15 000 to 30 000 hours. The first machine was delivered to Tweefontein in June 2023, the second and third units went to the Kamberg and the mill respectively in July and August, and the fourth machine also went to the Kamberg in February 2024. The machines were supplied with anti-siphon devices in the diesel tanks to guard against fuel theft. "We put two new machines in the Kamberg because it's so far away and I know for the next five years, at least, I'm not going to have problems with those machines like pipes bursting and breakdowns," Brendon explains.

The Loggers on the farms generally work seven to eight hours per day pulling trees to a central site, sorting, stacking, and loading

trucks. They handle about 50t of timber daily, which can be 5,2m or 2,5m lengths depending on market needs at the time. Brendon is full of praise for his old workhorses: "Those old Loggers with the Vickers pumps were the best Loggers Bell have ever made in my mind. So easy to fix; you can fix a wheel motor or a pump in two to three hours. You don't need a specialist, and you can fix it in the plantation, wherever, it's easy."

However, he is grateful for the improvements on the F-series: "There are so many advantages with these new ones. The big thing is safety, and I bought the 225Fs with operator doors for that reason."

Brendon appreciates the lower centre of gravity, due to the weight transfer with the diesel tank

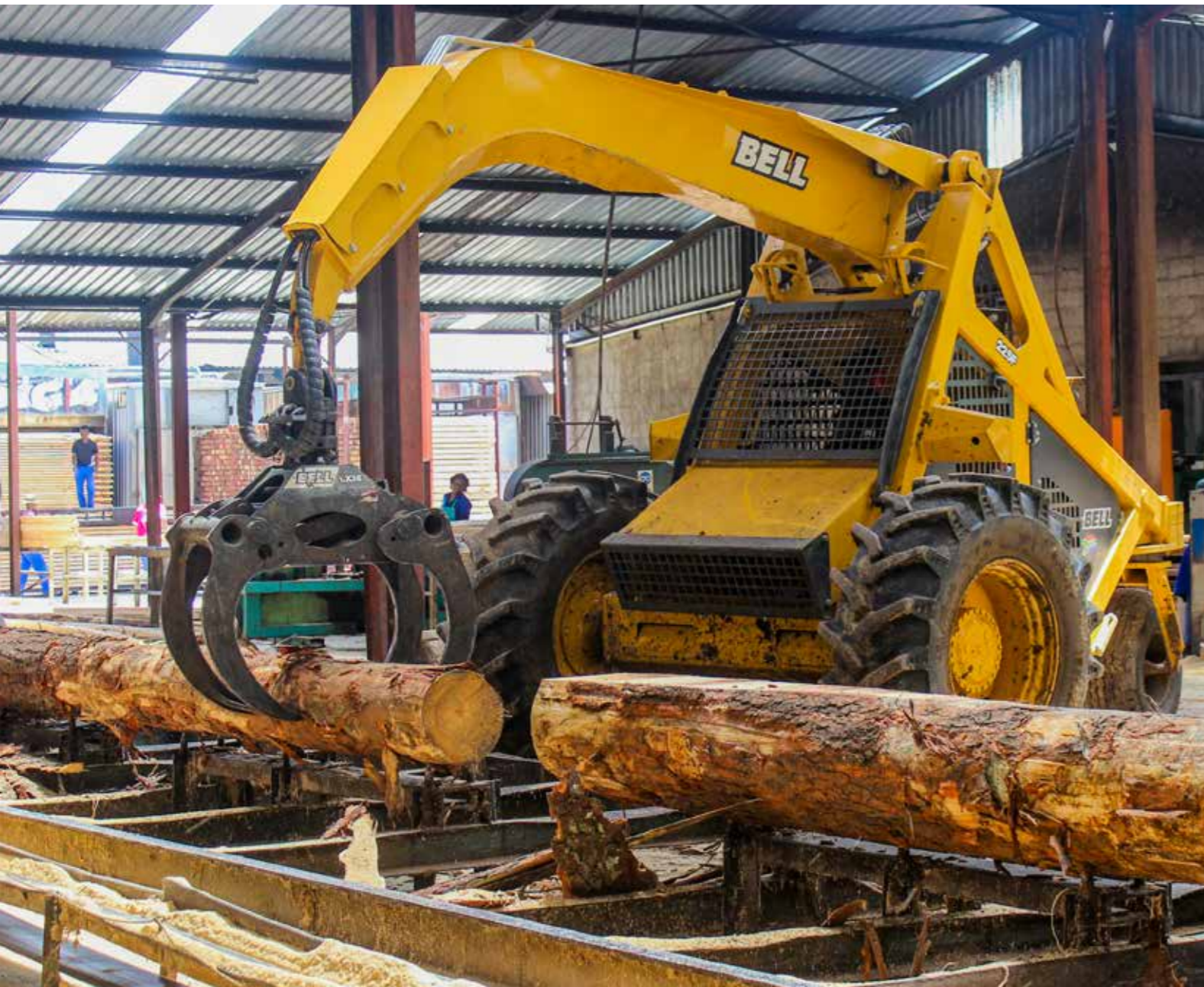
positioning and the wider wheelbase, as further safety improvements making the machine more stable. And, with an average fuel burn of 4,5 to 5 litres and hour, the new F-series machines run on about a litre an hour less fuel than their A-series counterparts, and much quieter due to the water-cooled engine.

"They are a lot more complicated, but I have faith that they will last just as long," he says. The longevity of his old machines he attributes to servicing every 250 hours. "All those that we sold were still fine, they weren't losing oil. The key is servicing. Oil and filters are cheap; it's just the time."

Bell will service the new Loggers every 500 hours in the warranty period, and this aligns with Jeffeson Timbers, which now services their machines every 500 hours after switching to semi-synthetic oil. "We've done that across the board for every vehicle we own because with these new oils you can service every 500 hours with no problem. The semi-synthetic oil isn't that much more expensive but you're saving

yourself all that time for servicing, the cost of oil and filters, and the mechanic's time. It's made a huge difference from a mechanic that is servicing madly every 250 hours to now being able to do other things."

As the company continues to develop, Brendon remains focused on simplifying operations and maximising sustainability, which includes responsible forestry practices to preserve the soil for future generations. This dedication to quality and self-reliance is sure to see Jeffeson Timbers grow to be as enduring as the trees themselves.



(From left): Keith Milne (Bell Equipment Sales Representative), Hayden Raw (Junior Manager, Jeffeson Timbers), Brandon Morgan (Mill Manager, Jeffeson Timbers), and Brendon Raw (Owner, Jeffeson Timbers).

# New JCB 3CX Backhoe Loaders packed with new features

The highly anticipated range of updated JCB 3CX Backhoe Loaders for agriculture is fast building on the brand's popularity with new features designed to provide improved comfort, versatility, and productivity, and ultimately reduce costs and increase efficiency.

Bell Equipment Dealer Customer Support Representative, Jan Ferreira says: "We have the 3CX, which is an efficiency machine with its 55kW engine and general-purpose bucket, and then we have a performance machine in the 3CX Pro, with its 68kW engine and 6-in-1 bucket. Both are highly capable and productive machines that would be useful workhorses on any farm."

The 3CX range has received an impressive cab makeover with high quality moulded plastics, and light grey pillars and roof that give a lighter and more spacious feel. "The cabs are ROPS/FOPS certified, and the seat rotation area is larger to give the operator more room, which together with improved cab sealing to keep out water and dust, creates a cleaner and more pleasant workspace. There is also improved visibility to the working area behind the machine."

"Most importantly the new cab places a huge focus on operator safety, comfort, and ease of operation. For example, the loader lever has been simplified to operate like a wheel loader. The 3CX has a single lever loader control incorporating an F-N-R directional switch so an operator can control the loader and transmission with one hand. In addition, there is a proportional switch on the side of the lever to operate the 6-in-1 bucket, which further reduces the effort needed to operate the machine."

The 3CX Pro also features servo controls, like an excavator's joystick controls, for ease of operation while hammer pipework increases the versatility of the machine.

Both machines feature the new EasyShift transmission with 'kick down' as standard. This simplifies gear changing, which is done by

rotating the F-N-R directional lever next to the steering wheel. The kick down switch is located on the floor and allows the operator to drop from second to first gear when extra push power is needed for loading or site stripping.

Under the bonnet, the JCB 3CX and 3CX Pro benefit from improved hydraulic efficiency thanks to new variable displacement piston pumps. The larger pump provides 150lpm, a 39% increase over the previous model. This allows the engine speed to be reduced whilst maintaining productivity effectively reducing fuel consumption. Furthermore, the variable flow pump only provides flow on demand and backs-off the flow when not required to reduce load on the engine and improve fuel consumption.

In addition, the Pro has a Smooth Ride System for improved roading



**The spacious interior of the new JCB 3CX Pro places a huge focus on operator safety, comfort, and ease of operation.**

as standard and can be provided with a 6-in-1 bucket with the option of flip over forks for added versatility. "The 6-in-1 bucket can be used for dozing, loading, digging, grabbing, spreading, and grading while the optional flip over forks are ideal for machines that will double up as a forklift for pick and place activities around the work site and to unload vehicles," Jan adds.

Lighting has been improved with six LED work lights instead of halogen lights. Two adjustable LEDs are fitted on the front and four on the rear, of which two can be adjusted. During night-time operations, the operator will be able to safely exit both the machine and worksite by aid of a 'guide me home' light system that keeps the work lights illuminated for 30 seconds after the ignition has been turned off.

Other useful standard features include an in-cab boom lock, front and rear wash/wiper functions, Return To Dig function, electronic throttle control, Bluetooth radio and USB ports, front and side LCD display, an adjustable steering column, and a battery isolator key, which allows the operator to isolate the machine's electrics while carrying out machine maintenance.



## The 3CX and 3CX Pro at a glance:

3CX	3CX PRO
55kW naturally aspirated engine	68.6kW turbo engine
Manual controls	Seat mounted servo controls
Front general purpose (GP) bucket	Front 6-in-1 bucket
Optional: flip over forks	Optional: general purpose (GP) bucket Optional: flip over forks
Fixed dipper	Fixed dipper Optional: 'extradig' dipper
Rear 600mm bucket with optional trenching bucket	Rear 600mm bucket with optional trenching bucket
Fan only	Rear auxiliary bi-directional circuit
	Standard HVAC
	Various other attachments available on request

# Bell Graders: Impressing operators with precision performance

The highly anticipated Bell Motor Grader range will be on show at NAMPO 2025, with production planned to start in Q3 2025 for Stage 3 developing markets. Designed to meet the evolving needs of the industry, the new machines promise to deliver high productivity and precision accurate control with superior operator station ergonomics and visibility.



According to Bell Equipment Product Manager, Jeremiah Mokhomo, the company has drawn upon its 70 years of design and manufacturing experience and spent years of expensive research and development to ensure that Bell Graders are able

to demonstrate their capabilities in a variety of demanding applications.

Highlighting the Grader's robust design and reliability, he says: "Grading applications demand a powerful and dependable

machine that can consistently deliver precision and efficiency. Our new Bell Motor Graders have been rigorously tested to ensure they meet the highest industry expectations. We are confident that they will compare favourably with established industry leaders."

## A versatile product for international markets

The Bell Motor Grader range consists of three base models, each available in either a 4WD or 6WD configuration. The G140, which will be on display at NAMPO, is well suited to all maintenance and light to medium construction tasks. The G160, with its increased power and performance, is designed to handle heavy construction applications, while the G200 is designed for bulk earthworks and the mining industry.

Jeremiah explains: "From the outset, we factored in the requirements of a six-wheel drive configuration. This early integration, as opposed to trying to add it to the platform later, has resulted in a better-performing, more controllable, and robust machine that is easier to maintain. The significant improvement in performance achieved by adding front-wheel drive is only useful if it is reliable for the life of the grader, so we have invested time to make sure this is the case."



**Bell Equipment's test and pre-production Graders have been operating with great success in a wide variety of applications from landscaping through heavy ripping and final levels to overall road construction.**



**The large operator cab is ROPS/FOPS certified for operator protection and provides unobstructed visibility and climate-controlled comfort.**

Bell Motor Graders are powered by Cummins engines paired with ZF transmissions. The Bell G140 is fitted with a 6.7l Cummins engine and ZF ERGOPOWER transmission while the larger G160 and G200 are driven by a 9l Cummins engine with the ZF cPOWER transmission.

Jeremiah says: "The Cummins engines are known for their quiet operation, fuel efficiency, low maintenance, and reliability, and they met our expectations during testing. Additionally, these engines are Stage 3A certified, do not require exhaust gas recirculation (EGR), and are compatible with both hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) and B20 biodiesel. Stage 5 Graders will be launched in time and will meet the EU and USA emission regulations.

"The ERGOPOWER transmission is well respected in the grading application for entry-level units and we're particularly excited about the hydro-mechanical transmissions in the larger models, which are new for the industry and are performing exceptionally well for us in heavier duty applications.

"The Bell Grader is a truly global product, engineered to meet different international emission standards and operator control preferences. The staged global rollout will commence in Africa, South America and Southeast Asia followed by North America and Europe later."

#### **Built for the toughest challenges**

Drawing on over two decades of experience in the supply,

maintenance, and repair of motor graders, along with insights from industry experts, Bell Equipment has developed a clear view of what is important to make this product work. While retaining familiar controls and layouts, the Bell Motor Grader incorporates a range of advanced components and features that will help operators to improve productivity, accuracy, maintain costs, and deliver work efficiently.

As Bell has achieved success with its ability to intelligently automate specific functions within the ADT industry, automation also played a key role in the Motor Grader design process. This automation allows the operator to focus on precision grading while benefiting from improved fuel efficiency and extended component life.

Recognising the diverse range of applications and often remote uses of motor graders, Bell has standardised on high-quality, low-maintenance components, such as a fully sealed circle bearing. This allows extended service intervals and consistent grading performance without the need to make regular adjustments.

To further simplify operations, advanced diagnostics are incorporated into the machine to reduce the complexity of daily checks and servicing.

Utilising industry-leading components for all systems has been instrumental in achieving an efficient and robust machine.

"Getting established components to work well together is what our system engineers do well, and in a highly operator-sensitive product like a motor grader, we knew that we had to get the overall feel 100% right."

Importantly, Bell Equipment's focus on durability across all structures ensures that the Bell Grader's gooseneck main frame – engineered as a single piece construction to eliminate fatigue on fabricated joints will give maximum confidence in hard applications. In addition, the tandem axle, with enhanced bearing life and interaxle cooling, provides reliable performance in long-haul applications.

#### **Proven performance in real-world applications**

Bell Equipment's test and pre-production demo graders have been operating with great success in a wide variety of applications, from landscaping, heavy ripping, and final levels to overall road construction. "It has been really pleasing to see the improvements in efficiency and performance identified during the design stage being confirmed on real-world job sites.

"We've been encouraged by the positive feedback we've received from expert advisers and operators who have experienced our pre-production machines. We're excited to introduce the Bell Motor Grader and illustrate some of the advances we've made to a complicated piece of equipment," he concludes.



# Second Bell-JCB Agricultural Conference fosters a unified dealer network

*Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture hosted the second annual dealer conference in Richards Bay at the end of March, presenting the dealer delegates an opportunity to visit the Bell factory and gain a better understanding of the Bell-JCB partnership, product range, and culture.*

Speaking to the theme, 'Geared for Success', Bell Equipment's Head of Business Development, John Collins, welcomed the attendees. He explained that Bell, JCB, and the dealers are all interconnected gears working within the same system that need to support and drive each other forward, working in sync to deliver the best products and support, and create strong relationships for the benefit of their customers.

Gears need lubrication to function efficiently, and the conference provided just that, with JCB

Finance's Natasha Swanepoel, engaging with dealers about finance offers and exploring what JCB Finance can do differently to make their products and services more attractive to farmers.

According to ABSA's Senior Agricultural Economist, Marlene Louw, who gave a detailed analysis of agri trends, the agricultural sector is in positive territory following the dry conditions experienced in 2024. Although facing uncharted waters in terms of geopolitics and unpredictable weather patterns,

the country is seeing green shoots due to several factors, including the agile performance of logistics in the country and improved animal health, with diseases such as foot and mouth currently under control.

Visiting from JCB in the UK, Product Managers Georgina Williams and Ben Mansfield gave animated and informative presentations on the features and advantages of their respective products, namely the JCB Backhoe Loader and Loadall ranges.



# GEARED FOR SUCCESS



Bell Equipment Product Manager, Emile van Wyk, gave an overview of the Bell Forestry & Agriculture product range. He focused on the tri-wheeled Versalift and Forklift, and the new high powered 200hp Haulage Tractor, making dealers aware that these products are highly customisable for various applications. He also discussed the Bell range of special attachments, encouraging dealers to consider potential opportunities they could create for their businesses and customers.

Gershwin Gabagas from the Bell Equipment Global Logistics Centre in Johannesburg spoke about the online parts portal and the aftermarket product offering while Factory Product Support Representative, Callum Bell, said there were 23 training courses planned in 2025 and encouraged dealers to take advantage of the training opportunities. He also emphasised the importance of keeping JCB's LiveLink system up to date.

While predicted rainfall scuppered a planned visit to the Bell farm, delegates were able to kick a few tyres on the Bell test track at the factory where product specialists walked them around the Bell and JCB products. A demonstration of the locally developed Bell Motor Grader, and the opportunity to travel in a Bell ADT were standout moments of the session.

Other highlights of the conference were the factory tour, which gave dealers a better understanding of the design, engineering, and manufacturing capacity that exists at Bell Richards Bay, and the gala awards dinner where the top performing dealers were recognised as follows:



**JCB Most Agricultural Unit Sales 2024 – JBJ Machinery**



**Bell Forestry & Agriculture Highest Machine Sales 2024 – Bell Pietermaritzburg**



**Bell Forestry & Agriculture Highest Aftermarket Sales 2024 – Bell Pietermaritzburg**



**JCB Highest Aftermarket Sales 2024 – JBJ Machinery**



**Bell Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture Most Improved Aftermarket Sales 2024 – JWL Landbou**



**Highest JCB Finance Market Share 2024 – Truck & Tractor Specialist**



# Farmers pleased with Duivenhoks Diesel Diens dealer appointment

*In the rolling hills of the scenic Southern Cape lies Heidelberg and come September each year, this town and its surrounds are framed in bright yellow as the canola harvest ripens. Apart from canola, farmers here grow wheat, barley, and oats and many dairy farms dot the landscape.*

Here we find Duivenhoks Diesel Diens, one of Bell Equipment's Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture's most recently accredited dealers. The name of the dealership is taken from the Duivenhoks River that runs through the town and translated from Dutch, means a pigeon coop or cage.

Duivenhoks Diesel Diens was founded by the late Martin le Roux but his legacy lives on in his vibrant family who are still enthusiastically driving and expanding the business.

"My late dad Martin hailed from Knysna and had done his diesel mechanical apprenticeship with a

company in Oranjemund before moving to Heidelberg in 1972 to start his own workshop focusing on the farmers in the area," says his son, who is also called Martin but known to all by his childhood nickname, Doons. "We serve a large farming area that stretches from George in the East to Caledon in the West and, at some

stage, my dad started selling agricultural tractors and implements."

Duivenhoks Diesel Diens is a real family affair with Doons assisted by his charming wife, Leoni, and mother, Emma, who both work in the dealership's administration division. Emma cuts a remarkable figure as now in her eighties, she is of the last to leave the dealership in the afternoon each day.

Doons and Leoni's elder daughter, Le-Rina, oversees their transport division and son, Martin, is a diesel apprentice about to qualify. The couple have one other daughter, Emmarie, who is in Grade 11 and aspires to enter the world of accountancy.

Doons' nephew, Johan, the son of his late brother, is a qualified diesel mechanic in the workshop where he works alongside three other qualified mechanics. They are assisted by six assistants and a

welding section manned by three welders, adding value to Duivenhoks' services. The mechanics do field servicing with fully equipped bakkies.

"We've sold small earthmoving equipment before, but we've always battled with technical and parts support," Doons says. "When Gerhard Rieker from JCB approached us in late 2023 to become a dealer for solid brands such as Bell Equipment and JCB, we jumped at the chance as we knew we'd be able to rely on getting the support that was so lacking before."

Doons mentions that since becoming a Bell and JCB dealer, he's noticed how many JCB Backhoe Loaders there already are in their operational area, which has since grown to encompass Swellendam, Ashton and to the Gourits River just before Mossel Bay.

"Our farming clients who already had JCB Backhoe Loaders and Loadalls are very pleased that they can now obtain their consumable and replacement parts and lubricants locally. With the ongoing training that our mechanics are being exposed to, we can also offer our customers complete peace of mind as to the support of the older and new JCB equipment."

During the past year Doons has sold three JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loaders and two JCB 531-70 Loadalls to farmers in his area with many other farmers enquiring about the yellow equipment and requesting quotations.

Duivenhoks Diesel Diens further sells and services two agricultural tractor ranges, planters, sprayers, high-speed disc ploughs and grain carts.



**(From left): Leoni le Roux, Martin le Roux (Jnr), Emma le Roux, Johan le Roux and Doons le Roux.**



# Dealer network expands to Humansdorp with Landmeg Landini

*Situated within one of the highest concentrations of dairy farms in South Africa, agricultural businesses in Humansdorp in the Eastern Cape are ideally situated to serve this vital part of the food chain.*

It is in Humansdorp where we find Landmeg Landini, an established business that has been appointed as a dealer for Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture. The business is owned by Rudi Nel along with his younger brother, Jean. The pair are part of a partnership of four members who established the business in Humansdorp in September 2016 with a branch in Cradock following a while later.

Both brothers have tertiary qualifications in agricultural management from Saasveld Agricultural College in George, which has enhanced the grounding and love of the land they had received from their parents who farmed near Coligny in the North West Province.

"Jean and I had both worked in different agricultural fields before embarking on being partners in Landmeg Landini," Rudi tells. "I had owned my own company, Rudi Nel Trading, which sold used agricultural tractors and implements and Jean was the area manager for the Northern, Eastern and Western Cape for a division of Illovo Sugar that sold chemicals derived from the sugar industry before he had a stint in citrus farming and selling agricultural equipment."

In 2016, the Nel brothers were approached by Riaan Pretorius, owner of Lezmin Landini in Kirkwood and Kenneth Thatcher, the

owner of Sun Valley Transport also of Kirkwood, to see whether they'd be interested in a business partnership to distribute the well-known Landini agricultural tractor range and other branded implements. Research had shown that opportunities for two such dealerships existed in Humansdorp and Cradock respectively and Landmeg Landini was subsequently launched in these two towns.



"It's interesting to note how our target markets differ between the two areas in which we operate with our Humansdorp outlet serving far more dairy and fruit farmers, with the latter growing apples, pears and especially citrus," Rudi says. "In the Cradock area, dairy isn't as intensive, and farmers cultivate more crops and have livestock."

"We're excited to be able to increase our offering of mechanical equipment to our respective target markets, having taken Bell and JCB yellow metal equipment on board, as there are already many similar but older JCB

Backhoe Loaders in the area which will need to be replaced in the near future. Since becoming the dealers for the market-leading JCB brand of Backhoe Loaders in Humansdorp, we've sold four JCB 3DX Pro machines to local people."

Landmeg Landini recently demonstrated a JCB 530-70 Agricultural Loadall machine to many of its farming clients with the aim of showcasing the machine's versatility in handling bales, bulk bags, pallets and many other tasks.

At Landmeg Landini in Humansdorp, Rudi manages the branch and keeps an eye over the mechanical maintenance and repair of both outlets. He is assisted by Paul Swiegers and Johan Steyn who make up the sales force, Adri Potgieter who oversees parts procurement and administration, and Penny Steyn, who admits his name is really a nickname. Penny has many years' valuable experience of the parts industry. Four mechanics, who all do field servicing, make up the balance of the Humansdorp Landmeg Landini team and collectively their years of experience are nudging 60 years.



**Rudi Nel of Landmeg Landini Humansdorp.**



# Tractor World now proudly serving Eastern Cape farmers with Bell and JCB

The sign on the side of Tractor World's imposing building in East London says: "Your answer for agriculture – Since 1948," which clearly shows that this latest signing in Bell Equipment Forestry & Agriculture and JCB Agriculture's growing network of dealers, has got some serious heritage.

Michael Howell, Tractor World's General Manager in East London, is part of that great lineage as his father, the late Clyde Howell, managed a branch of Weirs Massey Ferguson in Dordrecht in the Eastern Cape for 36 years. Weirs had other branches in Aliwal-North, Queenstown and East London and sold motor cars, agricultural tractors and implements.

"After finishing school at Queen's College in Queenstown, I went to work with my father at the Dordrecht branch and started off in the parts department where I sorted and packaged spares and so learnt what really made cars, tractors and agricultural implements work," Michael says.

"After about four years, I was moved to the workshop where, although I wasn't officially an apprentice mechanic, I learnt a lot about engines, transmissions and a myriad of other mechanical and auto-electrical componentry to be able to troubleshoot and find solutions, all disciplines that still stand me in good stead today."

Michael was transferred to the East London branch in 1999 and had by now moved into sales. In that same year, he sold a farm tractor to one Tony Cotterell. This might not seem exceptional, but what made it different was that Tony, the founder of the vast Kempston Group, must have been impressed by something about these agricultural equipment suppliers as the following year, he bought the East London branch. The Dordrecht branch was incorporated into the Kempston Group in 2022, and the Tractor World Group has a further service outlet in Alexandria.

"We rebranded as Tractor World in 2000 and are well established in our own premises in Settler's Way in Gately, in East London's south



side," Michael says. "From here we serve clients in a radius of around 300km and our farming clients are involved in growing pineapples, producing milk and dairy products, along with cattle and sheep breeders.

"Our branch in Dordrecht has clients growing maize, soya, potatoes, and, to a lesser extent, wheat along with some sheep breeding, all in a radius of around 170km around the town."

Michael says he and his team are excited at the prospect of selling JCB agricultural equipment from the East London branch, with the Dordrecht branch able to sell both Bell Forestry and Agriculture equipment along with JCB Agriculture products in terms of their agreement with Bell Equipment.

"We have, for a long time, felt the need to sell and service a niche brand of yellow metal machines into an eager agricultural market, and having a truly South African brand like Bell Equipment select us as a dealer to sell and maintain a

world-class brand such as JCB makes us very proud," he says. "We know that many farmers in our areas already run backhoe loaders, and we can say without fear of contradiction that probably 75% of those machines are JCB Backhoe Loaders that will require maintenance and, in some cases, replacing in due course."

Farmers are known to use backhoe loaders to maintain roads, irrigation infrastructure, drainage, farm dams and dig trenches while also loading fertiliser and compost.

"Then too, we're keen to demonstrate other useful products like the range of JCB Loadall Telehandlers as we're positive that once one farmer buys one, others will follow as that is a machine with an almost unending list of uses for any farm, such as off-loading pallets, stacking bales, handling bulk-bags of fertiliser, and using man-cages to reach up to repair windmills."

In East London, Michael is assisted by Rob Cloete, Ian Sansom, and Shaun Griffin on the sales and

marketing side and in Dordrecht, Calvin Sangerhaus is both the branch manager and the salesman in addition to being a qualified diesel mechanic. East London boasts five qualified mechanics and three apprentices and in Dordrecht two mechanics take care of mechanical repairs and servicing. All Tractor World's mechanics do field servicing and having a comprehensive parts holding ensures that recommended lubricants, service kits, consumables and OEM replacement parts are at hand when needed.

"We're proud to be part of the Kempston Group and having a charismatic leader such as Tony Cotterell inspire us with his hands-on approach, every day," Michael concludes. "We realise that adding great brands such as Bell Equipment and JCB to our already impressive offering brings greater responsibility but we're confident in our collective abilities to do all our brands proud."



**General Manager of Tractor World, Michael Howell.**

**BRAAI KIT - BOMA**



**R2 100<sup>00</sup>**

**BRAAI & CARVING SET**



**R650<sup>00</sup>**

**BRAAI TONGS**



**R130<sup>00</sup>**

**CAP - OILED CAMO**  
BROWN / GREEN



**R150<sup>00</sup>**

**HAT - SAFARI**  
BLACK/KHAKI



**R150<sup>00</sup>**

**HAT - CANVAS**  
OLIVE



**R110<sup>00</sup>**

**LEATHERMAN REV**



**R1 800<sup>00</sup>**

**MULTI-TOOL**



**R200<sup>00</sup>**

**LEATHER WALLET**  
BROWN



**R650<sup>00</sup>**

**JACKET - K-WAY**  
**PUFFER**  
BLACK  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R1 090<sup>00</sup>**

**SHIRT - LONG SLEEVE**  
BLACK  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R580<sup>00</sup>**

**SHIRT - SHORT SLEEVE**  
FATIGUE  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R550<sup>00</sup>**

**PARKER PEN**  
PEARL



**R980<sup>00</sup>**

**MULTI TOOL PEN**



**R120<sup>00</sup>**

**LEATHER**  
**DUFFEL BAG**



**R3 200<sup>00</sup>**

**JACKET**  
**CAMO PUFFER**  
SIZE: S - 5XL



**R1 090<sup>00</sup>**

**SHOES - MENS VELDSKOEN**  
TAN  
SIZE: 5 - 11



**R1 000<sup>00</sup>**

**BOOT - AFRICAN RANGER**  
**(NON STEEL CAP)**  
GREEN  
SIZE: 3 - 13



**R1 500<sup>00</sup>**

**VOYAGER CUP**  
1200ML  
DIFFERENT COLOURS



**R550<sup>00</sup>**

**THERMAL**  
**WATER BOTTLE**  
530ML  
DIFFERENT COLOURS



**R320<sup>00</sup>**

**LEATHER LUXE**  
**DUFFEL BAG**



**R3 100<sup>00</sup>**

**JACKET**  
**MENS K-WAY**  
**SOFTSHELL**



**R1 090<sup>00</sup>**

**SHOE - VELDSKOEN**  
YELLOW  
SIZE: 5 - 11



**R1000<sup>00</sup>**

**SHOE - S5 TURBO VELLIE**  
**(NONE STEEL CAP)**  
TAN  
SIZE: 5 - 12



**R800<sup>00</sup>**

**MULTI-PUPOSE DESK MAT**



**R250<sup>00</sup>**

**WOODEN TRACTOR**  
**SCALE MODEL**



**R450<sup>00</sup>**

**BELT - LEATHER**  
**WITH GRADER BUCKLE**  
BROWN



**R500<sup>00</sup>**

**BELL**  
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# The World's Favourite Backhoe Loader

**JCB 3CX PRO**



Building on JCB's proven pedigree, the 3CX Backhoe Loader range features an Easyshift transmission, high hydraulic flow, seat-mounted joysticks (Pro only), and more efficient air-conditioner and heater for superior performance and comfort.

Contact your nearest JCB Agriculture dealer today to find out more.  
Email: [forest.agri@bellequipment.com](mailto:forest.agri@bellequipment.com)  
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Bell-2318